

CLAIMS:

1. An isolated polypeptide consisting of a full length NS2/3 protease or a truncation thereof having as its N-terminal residue any one amino acid from amino acid 810 to amino acid 906.
2. An isolated polypeptide consisting of a truncation of an HCV NS2/3 protease, wherein said truncated NS2/3 protease has the minimal amino acid sequence from residues 904 to 1206 of the HCV 1b-40 full-length NS2/3 protease.
3. An isolated polypeptide consisting of a truncated NS2/3 protease as defined according to SEQ ID. NO: 4 or 10.
4. An isolated polypeptide consisting of an amino acid sequence that has 90% identity over its length compared to the polypeptide according to claim 3.
5. An isolated polypeptide consisting of a truncated NS2/3 protease selected from the group consisting of: a sequence as defined according to SEQ ID. NOs: 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.
6. A peptide having the sequence SFEGQGWRL (SEQ ID NO:21).
7. A peptide according to claim 6, wherein said peptide is a NS2/3 protease inhibitor.